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News stories

## **French light frigate “Commandant Bouan” ends her mandate in Sophia and hands over to her sister-ship**



Handover for operation SOPHIA amongst two French frigates.

From 9 February to 10 March 2017, the French light frigate “Commandant Bouan” had been part of EUNAVOFR MED operation SOPHIA. The operation’s core mandate is to contribute to EU efforts to disrupt the business model of human smuggling and trafficking networks in the Southern Central Mediterranean, and prevent the further loss of life at sea. Commandant Bouan participated to the UN arms embargo in Libya under the UNSCR 2292 adopted on 14 July 2016. The UN resolution allows Sophia’s units to inspect, seize and divert vessels suspected of illegal arms trafficking in Libya. During one month, Commandant Bouan has contributed to enhance maritime security off the Libyan coast, thanks to her specific support in the Counter Illegal Arms Trafficking (CIAT) activities in the area of operation.

Since 9 February, FS Commandant Bouan collected information about sea-lanes, maritime and weapons traffic to and from Libya. The French warship detected many merchant vessels and fishing boats making regular contacts with them, to better understand their pattern of life by, for example, carrying on some friendly approaches. Commandant Bouan is a light frigate of d'Estiennes d'Orves class. The support of a canine asset on board specialized in ammunitions and explosive research, the presence of an Arabic-speaking sailor on board and essentially the high level of engagement and resilience of the French light frigate crewmembers were the keys for the success of this mission. In the coming days, France will provide the operation with Commandant Bouan's sister ship, the FS "Commandant Birot", to keep on patrolling off Libyan coasts and pursue the efforts against arm trafficking in Libya.

Thus far, following EUNAVFOR MED activities, 104-suspected smugglers and traffickers have been prosecuted by the Italian authorities and 405 boats were prevented from being re-used by smugglers. Last but not least, 33.830 lives have been saved at sea. Since the beginning of the contribution to the UN arms embargo off the coast of Libya in September 2016, operation SOPHIA assets carried out 404 events related to the UN arms embargo off the coast of Libya, in accordance with the UNSCR 2292 (2016).





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